

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 EA-07  
ACDA-07 SNM-02 DEAE-00 EB-08 /111 W  
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R 011345Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2368  
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY  
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
AMCONSUL MADRAS  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4696

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR IN  
SUBJECT: MEA POLICY PLANNER SEES NO BASIC CHANGES IN GOI FOREIGN POLICY

1. VISITING INR SOUTH ASIA DIVISION CHIEF GEORGE G. B. VRIFFIN  
AND ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR CALLED UPON MEA POLICY  
PLANNER A.K. DAMODARAN MARCH 30 AT THE LATTER'S INVITATION.  
DAMODARAN OPENED THE CONVERSATION WITH AN ANIMATED AND  
ENTHUSIASTIC REPORT ON NEW FOREIGN MINISTER A.B. VAJPAYEE'S  
APPEARANCE BEFORE SEVERAL MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIR'S  
JOINT SECRETARIES THAT MORNING. DAMODARAN DESCRIBED  
VAJPAYEE AS " A CHARMING FELLOW WHO SPEAKS BEAUTIFUL HIDI",  
LACE WITH SANSKRIT; "THE KIND OF HINDI WE SOUTHERNERS  
REALLY APPRECIATE". DAMADARAN CALLED VAJPAYEE ONE OF THE  
BEST INFORMED MEMBERS OF THE NEW CABINET. HE ADDED  
THAT ONLY THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF, RAILWAYS MINISTER  
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DANDAVATE, OR JANATA LEADER ASHOK MEHTA HAD COMPARABLE  
QUALIFICATIONS TO SERVE AS FOREIGN MINISTER. DAMODARAN  
SAID THAT VAJPAYEE WAS COMPLETELY AT EASE BEFORE THE  
MEA SENIOU OFFICIALS.

2. DAMODARAN SAW NO BASIC CHANGES IN INDIAN FOREIGN  
POLICY. HE THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE MODIFICATIONS OF

STYLE, BUT POINTED OUT THAT THE PROBLEMS AND RELATIONSHIPS ALL REMAIN. "CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT WE WILL CANCEL OUR ARMS SUPPLY CONTRACTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION?" HE ASKED RHETORICALLY. HE SAID THERE WAS TOO MUCH INVOLVED, AND COMMENTED THAT THESE KINDS OF TIES ARE NOT BUILT OR UNDONE OVERNIGHT. AT THE SAME TIME, DAMODARAN CONTINUED, INDIA HAD ALREADY BEEN MOVING TOWARD A MORE MODERATE AND EVEN-HANDED POLICY. THIS WAS INDIRA GANDHI'S DOING, HE SAID, AND SHE MUST BE GIVEN CREDIT FOR IT. THROUGHOUT THE HOUR-LONG CONVERSATION DAMODARAN MADE PERIODIC AND FAVORABLE REFERENCES TO THE PAST PRIME MINISTER.

3. WHEN ASKED TO DEFINE "GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT", DAMODARAN CHUCKLED AND SAID IT DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING DIFFERENT THAN INDIA'S PAST NON-ALIGNED POLICY MEANT. HE SAID THAT IF HE WERE FORCED TO GIVE A DEFINITION HE WOULD SAY THAT GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT MEANS THAT THE GOI DOES NOT FAVOR ANY COUNTRY. IT MEANS BEING IMPARTIAL AS INDIA HAD BEEN UNDER MRS. GANDHI. DAMODARAN SAID HE SHIED AWAY FROM THE WORD "EQUIDISTANT" IN ATTEMPTING TO DEFINE NON-ALIGNMENT. HE FELT THAT WORD DID NOT ADEQUATELY DESCRIBE THE POLICY. (A SECOND MEA JOINT SECRETARY ON THE SAME EVENING DEFINED GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT AS THE GOI'S NON-ALIGNMENT POLICY AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT. A JANATA MP ON APRIL 1 WAS MORE SPECIFIC. HE SAID IT MEANT LESS INCLINATION TOWARD THE SOVIET POSITION.)

4. THE CONVERSATION TURNED BRIEFLY TO CHINA. DAMODARAN SAID HE COULD FORESEE SOME DIFFICULTIES OVER THE TIBET ISSUE. CONFIDENTIAL

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HE SAID IT WAS NOT A REAL PROBLEM. THE GOI WAS NOT GOING TO REVERSE NEHRU'S POSITION ON TIBET, BUT THERE MIGHT BE SOME RETHORIC WHICH COULD CAUSE IRRITATIONS. (SEE NEW DELHI 4580).

5. DAMODARAN SAID HE COULD NOT ANTICIPATE THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S NUCLEAR POLICIES MIGHT FINALLY BE. FOR HIS OWN PART, HE SAID, "I CAN'T SEE INDIA SIGNING THE DAMN DISCRIMINATORY TREATY (THE NPT)." HE APPRECIATED THE FULL MEASURE OF THE PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, AND SAID THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A REVIEW BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT. (IN A LONG INTERVIEW MARCH 31 WITH HUDSON INSTITUTE NON-PROLIFERATION EXPERT, DR. LEWIS DUNN, DAMODARAN REPORTEDLY TOOK A MORE CONCILIATORY LINE, ASSERTING THAT INDIA UNDERSTOOD THE DANGERS OF PROLIFERATION, AND WOULD HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROBLEM. IN SIMILAR INTERVIEWS ON THE SAME DATE, DUNN FOUND MEA ADDITIONAL SECRETARY M.A. VELLODI AND JOINT SECRETARY N. P. JAIN MUCH LESS RESPONSIVE THAN DAMODARAN.)

6. IN RESPONSE TO THE COUNSELOR'S QUESTION, DAMODARAN SAID HE HAD NOT MADE ANY FURTHER PROGRESS ON HIS STUDY OF INDO-US RELATIONS, A POLICY PAPER HE HAD EARLIER SAID HE PLANNED TO HAVE READY BY JULY. HE SAID THERE WERE NOW TOO MANY NEW FACTORS DAMODARAN WAS COMPLETELY FAMILIAR WITH THE DUBS STATEMENT BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMITTEE ON ASIA AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS ON MARCH 22. HE SAID, HOWEVER, HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE REFERENCE TO NARCOTICS IN THAT DOCUMENT. GRIFFIN ASSURED DAMODARAN THAT SECTION WAS WRITTEN WITH ANOTHER COUNTRY IN MIND. COMMENT: DURING THE PAST WEEK THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SEVERAL SENIOR MEA OFFICERS, ALL OF WHOM HAVE SOUGHT TO CONVINCE US THAT THERE WILL BE NO BASIC CHANGES IN THE GOI'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THIS IS THE MESSAGE THE NEW MINISTER HIMSELF CONVEYED TO THE PRESS AND TO CHIEFS OF MISSION ON MARCH 30 AND 31. IT IS HARDLY CONFIDENTIAL

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SURPRISING THAT THE PROFESSIONALS SHOULD WANT TO PRESENT THIS ASSESSMENT. THE PRESENT THRUST OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IS IN MANY WAYS THEIR CREATION, AND WE CAN EXPECT THE MEA TO CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR THIS CONTINUITY. WE CANNOT PREDICT HOW LONG THE NEW FOREIGN MINISTER MAY BE WILLING TO FOLLOW THW ADVICE OF THE PROFESSIONAL, BUT AT THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, HIS VIEWS AND THEIR VIEWS SEEM TO BE IN COMPLETE HARMONY. SCHNEIDER

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